

CABLE AND COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Date: 04/28/2010

Location: Council Office Building, Room 250

Committee Attendance: Jay Boyar, Kelly Cameron, Trish Evans, Bing Kung, Treffaney Lowe, Grant Moy and Noreene Wells. **Absent:** Mark Berman, Alex Cohen, Jose Zegarra Holder, Mona Hall McKenzie, Suzanne Weiss and Ben Wu. **Cable Office Staff:** Mitsuko Herrera and Keith Watkins.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- The Committee did not have a quorum for an official meeting and did not take any official actions, including approval of the draft agenda or draft minutes from the March meeting.

Cable Office Report

- Keith referenced the monthly complaint statistics that were sent to the committee in advance of the monthly meetings that complaints were steady. He also shared that inspections are being conducted differently and as a result the issues are being resolved much faster than in the past. **[Can we say how?]**
- Mitsuko updated the committee with information from a recent meeting with Comcast. Equipment offers that relate to DTA's (Digital Transport Adapters) and converter boxes were negotiated. A follow up meeting has been scheduled for Friday, April 30th.
- Mitsuko distributed and reviewed information with the committee regarding recent events that affect the County's budget. The budget deficit is now approximately one billion dollars. The County Executive submitted his budget to County Council on March 15th which included an additional \$186 million dollars of combined cuts and tax increases. The County Executive(?) sent a packet that included a revised Cable Plan to the MFP Committee on April 28 to address outcomes measures and impact of monies cut. As a result of these cuts no new construction will occur for Fibernet sites. Discussion ensued.
- The Chief Administrative Officer issued a memo dated April 26 regarding a freeze on all non-essential purchases (furniture, desktop printer cartridges, outside printing services, water or other food and beverages or related services, dues payments, and equipment rentals). As a result of this freeze the Cable Office will no longer be able to provide refreshments for any committee meetings.
- The Cable Office received a request from Suzanne inquiring about the ability for committee members to be issued County badges in order to access the County parking garage. The County Executive's office has confirmed that the stipend provided to Boards and Commission members should cover any parking expenses incurred. Expenses/reimbursements for parking and childcare for Boards and Committees are currently being reviewed because the County's financial situation is dire. Discussion ensued.
- Mitsuko also reviewed the effect of cuts made to the PEGs (Access Montgomery, County Cable Montgomery, Montgomery College and Montgomery County Public Schools). She encouraged the committee to contact Council in support of the Cable Plan. Discussion ensued.
- Mitsuko discussed with the committee Suzanne's request to place attachments along with the minutes. The Cable statistics are circulated to the committee prior to the meeting and have never been placed on the website. Kelly made the decision to continue with posting attachments distributed to the committee under the attachments link on the website. Keith will resend the third quarter report to the committee.
- Mitsuko reminded the committee of upcoming MFP meetings scheduled for Monday, May 3rd for the review of the Cable Plan and the morning of Tuesday, May 11th.

New Business

Kelly discussed elections for Chair and Vice Chair and term expirations. The committee will revisit this decision providing there is a quorum at the next scheduled meeting.

Old Business

- Kelly followed up on Trish's suggestion at last month meeting for committee members to put together a list of goals for the coming year. Trish asked that one of the goals for the newest members of the committee would be to reflect and share why they wanted to be a part of the CCAC and what they plan to bring to the committee in the form of advocacy. Grant suggested putting together information that can be taken back to various groups which would provide exposure to the CCAC and the Cable Office. Mitsuko suggested social media options could be explored. She also suggested that the following issues are likely to be pursued by the Cable Office at the FCC: closed captioning, customer service standards, set top boxes and consumer impact and requiring cable operators to carry information on local programming. Bing suggested posting the complaint statistics on the website. Jay suggested putting together a formal orientation for new members to help them get a better understanding of what the committee is charged with. Mitsuko reminded the group to complete their financial disclosure. She will forward the link which will reload last year's information. Discussion ensued.
- Kelly inquired on the renewal of Comcast Franchise Agreement. Mitsuko shared that Comcast franchise expires in June of 2013. The window for review of the agreement opens in June of this year. The Cable Office had considered completing a customer survey this fiscal year but due to our current financial state we will hold off until next year. There are several areas the Cable Office will be looking at (compliance with the franchise, a technical audit of the system, a focus group/needs assessment will be conducted to determine what the County's future cable related needs are, there will also be some extensive discussion on I-Net video conferencing facilities in buildings. The Cable Office will also look at ways for the public to use interactive cable or ways to access this feature and **provide them with the ability to remotely provide videos on the Access Channels. [What does this mean? Who would be providing videos?]**

There are also audits that are currently underway to determine the financial compliance in addition to determining the whole value of the franchise to the Cable Operator. The three most significant issues will be the funds currently paid to the County as part of a settlement agreement; the Cable Office wants to ensure that Comcast will be paying the same amount but they may not want to pay as much. The second issue is that the other providers pay the County 3% of gross revenue as PEG capital and Comcast pays a flat fee that was suggested by the CPI which will be a significant issue. Comcast also provides some maintenance and support for the I-Net/FiberNet. Customer service will also be included as a part of the discussion. The third will be determining the length of the franchise. Discussion ensued.

Adjournment

- Meeting ended at 8:40 p.m.
- Next committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 26th at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Office Building (COB).

Submitted by: Andrea Gardner, Office Services Coordinator